

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

(11) Publication number: .

0 294 518
A2

(12)

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(21) Application number: 87119382.7

(51) Int. Cl. 4: G06F 3/033

(22) Date of filing: 30.12.87

(30) Priority: 10.06.87 US 60225

(43) Date of publication of application:
14.12.88 Bulletin 88/50

(84) Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB NL

(71) Applicant: The Laitram Corporation
220 Laitram Lane
Harahan Louisiana 70115(US)

(72) Inventor: Lapeyre, James Martial
13 Richmond Place
New Orleans, Louisiana 70115(US)

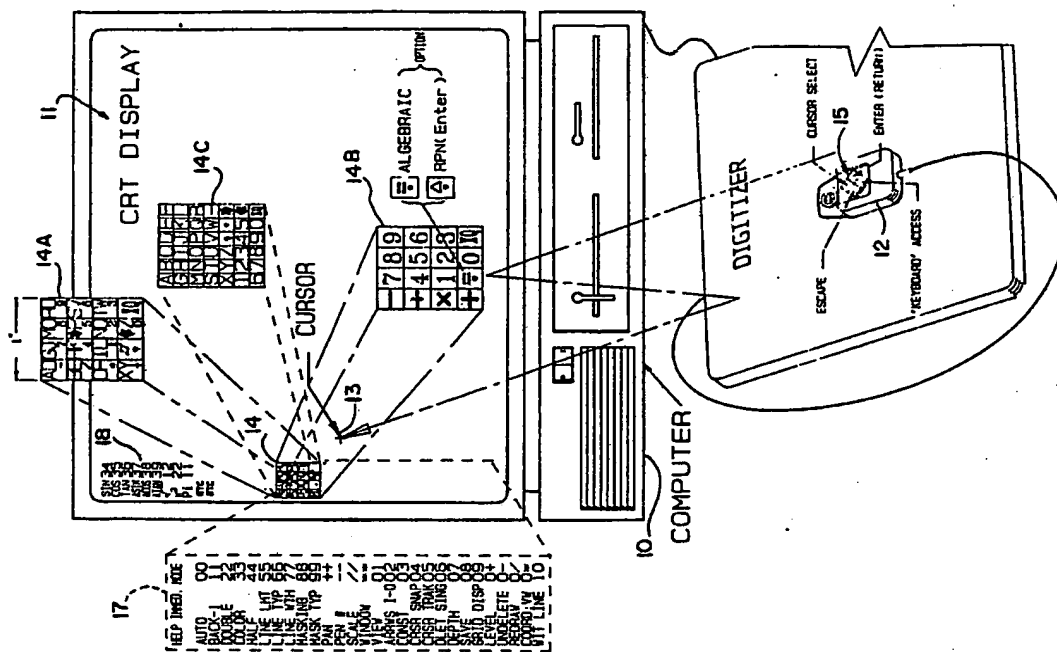
(74) Representative: Münzhuber, Robert,
Dipl.-Phys.
Patentanwalt Rumfordstrasse 10
D-8000 München 5(DE)

(54) Keyboard keys located on the computer screen.

(57) The conventional keyboard is replaced by a virtual keyboard pattern on the computer screen by this invention. Selection of keystrokes is made by a mouse, or the like, positioning a cursor at a desired key for keyswitch selection. This manner of selection of pre-formed patterns available from the computer, such as alphanumeric characters and computer commands is particularly advantageous in a computer aided drafting and design system. Thus, notations and lettering need not be formulated by analog movement of the mouse, but can be selected digitally from the computer store by keyswitching. The resulting equipment therefor eliminates the conventional keyboard but not its operational advantages thereby permitting full computer operation with a mouse or the equivalent. Several features of the invention are provided for more convenient and more rapid operation, such as the replacement of the keyboard arrays as the computer changes modes of operation, and the placement of more frequently used keystrokes on the keyboard arrays for selection by minimized movements of the mouse.

EP 0 294 518 A2

FIG. 1.



KEYBOARD KEYS LOCATED ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN

TECHNICAL FIELD:

U. S. Patent 4,547,860 Issued Oct. 15, 1985 provides for the use of as few as twelve keyboard keys for comprehensive manual entry of numeric data, alphanumeric data and computer control instructions. Furthermore that patent discloses an associated keyboard display for entry instructions of a large number of computer operations, which in essence replaces an instruction manual necessary theretofore to explain how to use a keyboard to instruct and program a general purpose computer.

This invention relates generally to manual entry into multi-purpose programmable computers of instructions and alphanumeric characters. More specifically it relates to improved systems of the aforesaid type of keyboard arrays of few keys for controlling a large number of manual entries in computer embodiments such as computer aided drafting and design systems to thereby produce alphanumeric notations and computer commands. A feature of this invention is the replacement of a typewriter like keyboard by a virtual keyboard displayed on a computer screen for operation by cursor selection from a manually operated mouse, puck, joystick, etc.

BACKGROUND ART:

At the present state of the computer art, multi-purpose computers capable of alphanumeric data processing necessitate manual entry of alphanumeric characters and operating instructions by means of typewriter-like keyboards.

In my hereinbefore defined keyboard cases, a few keys such as twelve or sixteen, are employed with a mode of computer operation to enter characters or instructions in response to two (or more) successive keystrokes, thereby to produce more than a hundred entries from the few keys. In my U. S. Patent 4,547,860 such keyboards are supplied with self-contained indicia that identifies the large number of computer input selections available without reference to instruction manuals for programming codes, or the like.

Computer systems are also known for aiding design and drafting of various pattern configurations under control of manual cursor control means such as a mouse or joystick. However in these systems, it is awkward and time consuming to enter identifying alphanumeric information. Also the amount of computer equipment is proliferated by requiring both a keyboard and a cursor control

mouse or the like. It has not been known in this art how to simply control computer commands and entry of preformed alphanumeric input characters by means of a mouse, or the like, without an additional keyboard.

It is therefore an object of this invention to produce a more efficient computer system operable without a typewriter-like keyboard.

It is a further object of this invention to produce a more effective computer aided drafting and design system that simply and quickly enters pre-determined commands and pre-formed alphanumeric characters and other patterns into desired locations on a computer formulated display. Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be found throughout the following specification, claims and drawings.

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION:

This invention provides for display of a virtual keyboard array on the screen of a computer to replace a conventional typewriter-like keyswitch array on a keyboard for the entry of computer commands and preformed patterns such as alphanumeric characters. Each input entry normally produced by a keyboard is rather by this invention manually selected by means of analog cursor control means, such as a mouse, which positions the cursor at a selected key on a virtual keyboard location on the computer screen and produces a keystroke to select an available stored computer entry. A keyboard can thus be eliminated without eliminating the keyboard function of entering a large number of preformed patterns including alphanumeric characters without analog formation by cursor manipulation. Also computer commands may be entered by cursor controlled key selections.

Arrays of as few as twelve or sixteen keys in a virtual keyboard display are provided in patterns that reduce significantly the amount of cursor movement, operator manipulation and time lapse in reproducing alphabetic data entries, to produce respectively 144 or 256 different entry selections desired for operation of multi-function alphanumeric computers.

The electronic virtual keyboard display pioneered by this invention gives considerable advantage in providing the operator with automatically updated information on the computer screen of the functions of specific keys whenever a change of key functioning occurs with a corresponding computer mode change. Thus, a virtual keyboard array

is displayed on the screen to indicate the current key roles in operation at any time. The key roles thus may be changed automatically in a plurality of computer or keyboard operating modes. Of particular interest is the automatic display of the separate keyboard functions in effect for each of the two selections in a two-stroke-per-entry mode.

Particular advantage of this system is afforded in alphanumerically annotating diagrams or sketches formed in computer aided drafting and design systems. Thus, the mouse, or like cursor and pattern positioning means, need not be manipulated in analog fashion to form annotation characters or other pattern formats which are available in the computer as preformed alphanumeric characters and other patterns. Rather the mouse merely moves the cursor about an electronically generated virtual keyboard display on the screen, to select one of the keys identified with a symbol that identifies the desired key function. Keyboard keys are positioned in the virtual keyboard array for arranging alphabetic characters to minimize the movement of the mouse in selection of characters in a body of text, thereby permitting selection of such text in less time.

This invention thus introduces a virtual keyboard presented on the computer screen and an analog manual cursor position control device to replace a conventional keyboard.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

Throughout the various views of the drawings, like reference characters are used to indicate similar features, to facilitate comparison. The description which follows will refer to the accompanying drawing, wherein:

Figure 1 is a sketch of a computer system embodying the invention wherein a mouse serves to make a keyboard selection from a virtual keyboard displayed on the computer screen.

Figure 2 is a sketch of a computer display screen for a computer aided drafting and design system constructed in accordance with this invention,

Figure 3 is a chart of a twelve key keyboard array used in one embodiment of this invention with the displayed symbols for selection of some of the 144 available keyboard entries in the two-stroke-per-entry mode,

Figure 4 is a block diagram of a computer system embodying the invention,

Figure 5 is a data flow diagram in block format illustrating the mode of operation of a computer embodying this invention,

Figure 6 is a further keyboard array sketch embodiment of the invention for a twelve key keyboard array,

Figure 7 is a keyboard layout for a sixteen key keyboard array provided in a preferred embodiment of the invention, and

Figure 8 is a chart showing the two stroke sequence for alphanumeric selections in the keyboard embodiment of Figure 7.

THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT:

As may be seen from Figure 1, a computer 10 has a display screen 11 and a mouse 12 coupled for control of the position of the cursor 13. This assembly constitutes a computer aided design and drafting system, whereby sketches may be drawn on the computer screen by manipulation of the mouse 12, under control of conventional software and the instruction keyswitches 15 operable as the mouse is positioned to control the cursor position.

The improvement added by this invention is the ability to enter pre-formed patterns simply from the computer system, such as for example the alphanumeric characters desired to annotate or explain any design formed on the display screen. Thus, the computer 10 need have alphanumeric data processing capabilities, such as those usually manipulated by means of a conventional typewriter-like keyboard. The keyboard is however replaced in this invention by an electronically generated virtual keyboard 14 displayed upon the computer screen.

To stroke this initial keyboard displayed on the computer screen, only the mouse 12 is required. Thus the cursor 13 is physically positioned by movement of the mouse 12 to rest at one of the keys of the virtual keyboard 14 displayed on the screen. The individual keys are located in the chart subrectangles shown for convenience in enlarged form in the drawing by phantom lines linked to the virtual keyboard 14. After locating the cursor on a particular virtual key zone, one of the mouse keyswitches 15 then produces a keystroke to select the particular pattern or computer instruction available from the computer, as indicated by a corresponding symbol on the virtual keyboard 14 on the screen. The mouse could of course be some equivalent cursor positioning means, such as a joystick or a finger contacting the surface of the screen.

Two different sixteen key virtual keyboard configurations 14A and 14B are shown in enlarged view in a format provided for alphanumeric and numeric modes of computer operation. The numeric embodiment 14B is of the one-stroke-per-entry type, and the alphanumeric embodiment 14A

is of the two-stroke-per-entry type.

The decimal point key is shown by the optional notation to have a dual function upon the second stroke within a decimal word, thereby to produce an algebraic operation or entry function, as set forth in my U. S. Patent 4,567,567 of Jan. 28, 1986 for Computer Keyboard Displaying Many Operating Instructions with Few Keys.

Also, the 42 key keyboard configuration 14C could be used for simply alphanumeric character entries in response to a single-stroke-per-entry mode of operation. This does not give the 256 choices available from the fewer keys of the keyboard configuration 14A, however.

The phantom line 16 represents the function of the mouse 12, when used in accordance with this invention in determining the location of the cursor 13 to any desired position on the screen 11.

Other types of indicia aiding in keystroke selection of desired functions may be provided on the screen display as shown at the table 18 when the keyboard embodiment 14A is shown. Alternatively a "Help" mode may display such keystroke selection aid as the table 17.

The four selection keys 15 on the mouse 12 can be programmed for various functions. Four such typical functions are identified. Thus the "escape" key may be used for direct positive control of the escape function. In a corresponding manner the "enter" key can directly instruct the computer to indicate when a computer entry word or passage is completed and is to be stored. The "keyboard" access key will activate the keyboard mode. The "cursor select" key is the keystroking key in this configuration.

The screen 11 is shown diagrammatically in Figure 2, with an embodiment of the virtual keyboard 14 enlarged to substantially actual viewing size on a computer screen. This is a twelve key embodiment capable of digitizing alphanumerically the preformed characters of a period or decimal point, the alphabet and decimal digits. Also other patterns, control functions and computer commands are feasible up to 144 selections with the keyboard operated in the two-stroke-per-entry mode as set forth in the parent cases hereto. That is the computer is operated internally in a keyboard entry mode to recognize as an entry from the keyboard two successive keystrokes to thereby identify one of the 144 entries possible with only twelve keys. The keyboard notation therefore in Figures 2 and 3 relate to this mode of operation and sets forth the symbols on the keyboard identifying some of the various patterns and computer commands available from storage in computer 10. The initial keyboard has displayed for the twelve keys the decimal digits 0 to 9, a period and an execute or enter key. These are the larger char-

acters in Figure 2, which also constitute the characters alongside the rectangles in Figure 3.

The computer may be placed into a single-stroke-per-entry keyboard mode for numeric operations, and entry of the basic keyboard data with a single stroke, if desired. Then these keyboard symbols denote the key function. Otherwise, these decimal digits, etc. are only key names for aiding selection of the first key of the two required, as will be made clear in the discussion of Figure 2 hereinafter.

As seen from Figure 2, the computer assisted drawing and design function can not only produce the triangular design 20, or other desired pattern by means of analog control of the mouse, but the design, in accordance with this invention, may enter appropriate annotated remarks in digital fashion using the prestored patterns selected from operation of the virtual keyboard. This is typified by the designation of one angle as "alpha", the other angle with "45 degrees" and noting the title "PART 3-B". The various notation digits are thus selected by means of the virtual keyboard from pre-formed patterns and need not be formed by analog mouse manipulation to draw a corresponding pattern or by the use of a conventional mechanical keyboard.

In accordance with another feature of the invention, the keyboard array 14 shown on screen 11 is changed automatically to correspond with the computer mode in effect at the time. That, now explained by example, illustrates a two-stroke-per-entry mode of operation for designating alphanumeric digital entries. That virtual keyboard array displayed on the screen in Figure 2 thus is presented for a first keystroke, and one of those twelve rectangular keyboard arrays alongside the respective key names 0 to 9, etc., in Figure 3 is reproduced automatically by the first keystroke selection on the screen 11 for identifying the functions performable by the second stroke.

As may be seen the letters A, D and G are available after striking 7 as a first key, as well as several other selections. Similarly after striking the period key, the decimal digits 0 to 9 are available, or after striking the execute key several computer commands are available. Note also that the execute key on the second stroke can be used to clear the first key stroke (clf) or by two strokes of XQ, the last key stroke can be cleared(cil).

In this particular layout of the alphabet the amount of movement of the cursor is minimized. Thus, for the more extensively used letters of the alphabet and spaces (used for every word), no second cursor movement is required. Thus A is selected by 7-7, E by 4-4, I by 1-1, O by 8-8, Space by 5-5, N by 2-2, R by 9-9, S by 6-6 and T by 3-3. By calculations from most frequently used letter tables, this means about 80% of normal typ-

ing is accomplished by use of these nine keys, where only one cursor movement is made to an initial key and a double stroke of the stroking key on the mouse completes the entry without moving the mouse. Other letters and symbols more frequently used are similarly placed to be reached by the shorter movements of the cursor from the initial key selection position to the second choice.

Note that this keyboard system corresponds to an alphanumeric mode of operation by the computer. An alternate keyboard system selected in a "drawing" mode, for example, might have a large range of geometric patterns available for use in synthesizing drawings or designs on the screen in a digital selection mode by the cursor rather than in an analog pattern formation mode. Thus, this system provides for the first time an efficient automated computer aided drafting and drawing system for keyboard-like selection of pre-formed patterns including alphanumeric characters by means of the cursor control mouse or equivalent means.

A computer system is organized as shown in the block diagram of Figure 4 for the practice of this invention. In general, the multi-purpose programmable computer 10 is coupled in a conventional manner to the display panel 11 and cursor positioning means 12. In this respect, the system comprises a computer aided drawing and drafting system of the prior art.

There is however provided in accordance with this invention the virtual keyboard 14 on the display panel, and the operating system therefor. The two-stroke-per-entry mode selector 24 has been adequately described in the parent applications incorporated herein by reference. That feature in combination herein makes feasible the use of more comprehensive libraries of predetermined commands and of pre-formed patterns for selection, and for the first time makes possible the use of a mouse, or the like, to replace the conventional keyboard for manual input of alphanumeric data, with corresponding advantages of simplicity and high speed manual data input. That is, as hereinbefore described, very little movement of the mouse is needed to make a very large range of manual input selections.

It is known in the computer art to detect the position of a cursor on a screen, and to thereby control a subsequent computer operation in response to the detected cursor position. In menu driven computer programs, for example, a cursor notation, selected by cursor means such as a moving block or pointer is frequently used to select the next operation sequence to be taken by the computer. Such a cursor position detector 26 is employed herein for the different combinational interaction required in replacing a conventional keyboard with the virtual keyboard 14, which is merely

an electronic pattern generated on the face of the screen 11 by a pattern generator 27, rather than a set of keyswitches requiring manual keystrokes, in the same manner as a typewriter. The illumination of the keyboard on the screen always provides optimum visibility without supplemental illumination, as required for mechanical keyboards.

Thus the keyboard pattern, and the corresponding key symbols identifying the respective key functions, are developed on the computer screen and stored in the computer memory in the same manner as the patterns of conventional screen displays in various computer systems. In the particular twelve keyswitch example hereinbefore described, the cursor position detector need identify the key selected by the cursor in the keyboard mode by identifying one of the twelve areas on the keyboard designated a keyswitch for each keystroke of a two keystroke sequence. Then the programming and pattern selection switch 28, in this case a one of 144 selection switching system, will recall the corresponding stored pre-formed pattern via lead 29, or initiate the appropriate computer command via lead 30. Accordingly those skilled in the art may in existing computer systems adopt this invention with simple changes in computer system organization and using conventional type techniques.

To better understand the flow of data and control signals in the computer system afforded by this invention, reference is made to the block flow diagram of Figure 5. This particular diagram is directed to a system employing a two-keystroke-per-entry mode of operation to place two different virtual keyboards 14 on the screen automatically as the alternate computer modes for the first keystroke and the second stroke are established by the mode timer and selector 35, via two stroke detector means 36, which could simply be a toggle or flip-flop circuit.

Thus when the mode selector 35 is in the keyboard mode for alphanumeric selections of the type hereinbefore discussed, then two alternate keyboard arrays are to be selected for display by the selector 37, responsive to the keystrokes from the mouse mounted switching means 15. The first keystroke serves at the set output lead 38 of the two stroke detector 36 to display the second virtual keyboard array 14 on the screen 11. The second successive keystroke of the entry cycle will then reset the key display to the proper array for the first keystroke of the next entry via lead 39. Also that second keystroke will via AND circuit 40 and the code selector switching circuit 28 operated by the two selected keystrokes by means of the cursor position detector (26, Fig. 4) selects a pre-formed character pattern or instruction from the computer store by way of block 41. Thus a se-

lected pattern such as an alphanumeric character will be formed on the display 11, as if it were chosen from a conventional manually stroked keyswitch array.

The dotted cursor position control line 45 signifies the means for choosing the key to be stroked by keystroke switch means 15 in the cursor movement mode of mode selector 35 as indicated at lead 46. Once a pattern is selected, it may be moved into a desired position on the screen in the same manner by the mouse, as indicated by the pattern positioning mode lead 47. The computer thus, via AND circuit 48, will select a mode for generation of the digital pre-stored patterns, or the analog drawing of patterns by the mouse means 12. Note also that the computer mode selector 35 will by way of the dotted line communication link 49 set up any corresponding keyboard-symbol array and corresponding pattern and instruction repertoire that should be used in that mode, such as for example, the one stroke per entry numerical mode previously discussed.

Alternative keyboard arrays may be advantageous under certain circumstances, such as that shown in Figure 6, wherein the alphabetic selections are confined within the range of the 4, 5, and 6 initial selection keys. For example, with only three keys necessary, the available switches (15) on the mouse can be programmed to make the first key selection, thus effectively saving one of the two cursor movements necessary.

With an array of sixteen keys as set forth in the two-stroke-per-entry mode, 256 selections are afforded. On high resolution computer screens, this keyboard array (14A) is quite legible in a one-inch square pattern, as set forth at 60 in Figure 7, representing a foreshortened set of symbols useful for the alphanumeric mode of operation. The lowermost symbol 61 for each virtual key represents the key "name" taken from a numeric single stroke keyboard configuration (14B), which includes some arithmetic operations as shown in the leftmost column. Two alphabet characters 62, etc., are disposed in each of the sixteen second keystroke arrays (shown with the key names to the left), except for the X, Y, Z virtual key 63. That permits all the numerical digits to be on the period key second stroke, the miscellaneous punctuation symbols on the "0" key and computer command functions, such as mode changes, on the XQ key. Also more important, the sixteen different more frequently used alphabetic characters each can be selected by a double keystroke without moving the cursor position.

The chart of Figure 8 lays out for the major symbols of a typewriter keyboard selection, the two successive keystrokes required, showing the minimization of the cursor movement, and the convenience of numeric selection by the primary key

number position after preselection of the period key in each instance.

This invention therefore provides a computer system that replaces the conventional typewriter-type keyboard with a simpler analog manual entry cursor positioning means, such as a mouse. This analog selection means is used in one mode to generate patterns on the computer screen manually by analog movement and by this invention is used in the analog cursor positioning mode to select from a large number of pre-formed patterns and computer commands displayed on a keyboard simulating chart presented on the computer screen, thereby to operate in a keyboard type digital entry mode without the necessity of providing a separate digitally fingered keyboard.

Having therefore set forth the nature and organization of this invention in its preferred embodiments, those features of novelty believed descriptive of the spirit and nature of the invention are set forth with particularity in the following claims.

25 Claims

1. A computer system having a visible display screen, characterized by:

means for displaying on a portion of the screen a virtual keyboard array presenting a plurality of virtual key locations having thereat symbols identifying a set of computer reproducible patterns and computer instructions to be selected by the respective virtual keys, and

manually positionable keystroking means for selecting a desired one of the virtual keys on said screen and initiating a computer operation corresponding to the symbol identified at the selected virtual key location.

2. The system of Claim 1 further characterized by:

means displaying a cursor on said screen, and means responsive to the keystroking means to move the cursor to the position of a displayed virtual key location on the screen.

3. The system of Claim 2 further characterized by:

means for detecting the location of the cursor position on the screen at the different virtual key locations, and

means responsive detection of the cursor position at the virtual key locations to initiate selection of a pre-formed pattern or computer instruction.

4. The system of Claim 1 further characterized by:

means for producing a plurality of computer operation modes that change the functions initiated

by the keyboard keys, and

means responsive to mode changes in the computer to display different virtual keyboard patterns on the screen.

5. The system of Claim 1 further characterized by:

means for operating the computer in a mode requiring two keystrokes per entry thereby to reduce the number of virtual keys required on the computer screen.

6. The system of Claim 5 further characterized by:

means for displaying one set of virtual keys on the screen for the first keystroke, and another set of virtual keys on the screen for the second keystroke.

7. The system of Claim 6 further characterized by a set of patterns reproducible by said computer and displayed on the virtual keyboard for selection by respective keys in said two keystroke sequence, and

means positioning the symbols in a pattern for selecting a set of the most frequently used patterns without movably repositioning the manual keystroking means for the second keystroke.

8. The system of Claim 7 further characterized by:

means for establishing as patterns in said set the alphabet.

9. The system of Claim 8 further characterized in having no more than sixteen virtual keys.

10. The system of Claim 1 further characterized in that the keystroking means comprises a mouse, and means for positioning a cursor on the screen to a key selection position responsive to the mouse position.

11. The system of Claim 10 further characterized by means for formulating patterns on the screen by positioning of the mouse to supplement patterns selectable by means of the virtual keyboard.

12. The system of Claim 1 further characterized by:

a multi-function data processing computer system having a computer generated display screen presenting patterns selected by manually operated analog cursor positioning input means,

means for selecting with the analog input means keystrokes for a wide range of pre-formed patterns and manually selected computer command signals thereby constituting said keystroking means and including analog manual input means operable to move manually in analog movement patterns the position of a cursor on the computer screen to the different positions within said keyboard array for designating keystrokes to thereby select by the cursor position a desired keystroke entry from the patterns and commands identified

on the screen, and

keystroke switching means for entering a computer input signal from a selection made in response to the position of the cursor at any one of the respective keystroke areas within said chart.

13. The improved computer system as defined in Claim 12, further characterized by:

a computer interconnecting system coupling the computer screen and the manual entry means into a computer aided drafting and design system operable to generate patterns on the computer screen by analog manual movement of the analog entry means and to select preformed patterns for placement on the computer screen along with the manually generated patterns in a keyboard selection mode of the computer operation.

14. The improved computer system as defined in Claim 12, further characterized by:

computer means establishing a plurality of modes of operation, each configuring the keys on the keyboard to produce different sets of functions, and

pattern generating means responsive to the existing modes of computer operation automatically displaying a virtual keyboard configuration on the computer screen chart with symbols identifying the functions of keys in the respective modes.

15. The improved computer system as defined in Claim 14, further characterized by:

means in said computer system establishing a virtual keyboard configuration on the computer screen operational in a two-stroke-per-entry mode with selections of keyboard keys from two successively presented keyboard configurations.

16. The improved computer system as defined in Claim 15, further characterized by:

means in said computer system configuring the second successively presented keyboard in an alphabetic selection mode having the most frequently used alphabetic characters selectable from the second keyboard configuration at the same location as for the first keystroke on the first keyboard configuration.

17. The improved computer system as defined in Claim 12, further characterized by:

means providing for said keyboard array to present an alphanumeric set of pre-formed characters,

means for forming the preformed characters on said screen in response to the selection made by said keystroke switching means, and

means for moving the characters on said screen in response to manual movement of said analog manual input means.

18. The improved computer system as defined in Claim 12, further characterized by:

means responsive to manual movement of the

analog input means to position patterns on said screen after selection by said keystroke switching means.

5

10

15

20

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

8

FIG. 1.

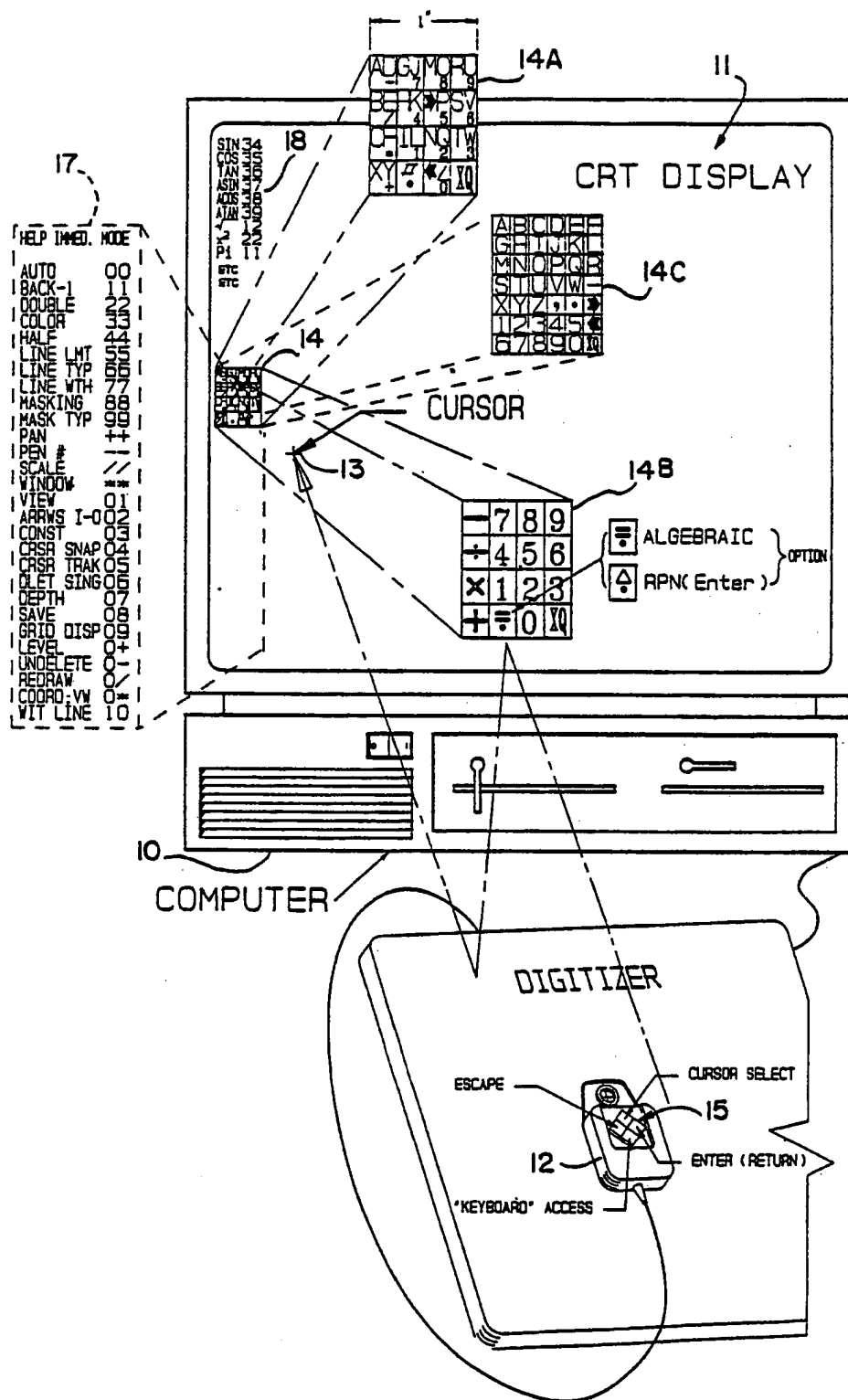


FIG. 2.

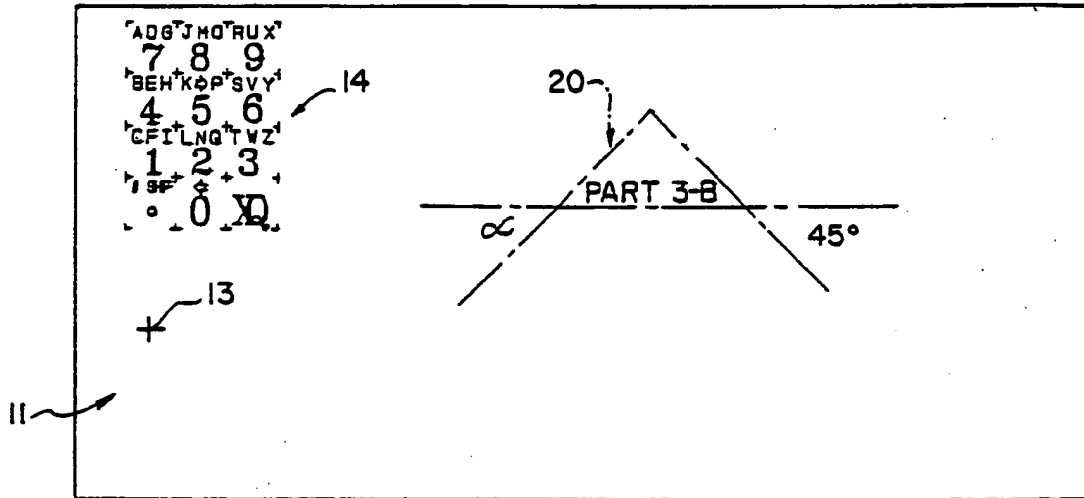


FIG. 3.

7	<table><tr><td>7</td><td>A</td><td>α</td><td>β</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>y</td><td>D</td><td>ϵ</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>n</td><td>G</td><td>λ</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td></td><td>F7</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7	A	α	β	4	y	D	ϵ	1	n	G	λ	0		F7	clf	8	<table><tr><td>7</td><td>(</td><td>O</td><td>)</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>[</td><td>M</td><td>]</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>{</td><td>J</td><td>}</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td></td><td>F8</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7	(O)	4	[M]	1	{	J	}	0		F8	clf	9	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td></td><td>R</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td></td><td>U</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td></td><td>X</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td></td><td>F9</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7			R	4		U		1		X		0		F9	clf
7	A	α	β																																																		
4	y	D	ϵ																																																		
1	n	G	λ																																																		
0		F7	clf																																																		
7	(O)																																																		
4	[M]																																																		
1	{	J	}																																																		
0		F8	clf																																																		
7			R																																																		
4		U																																																			
1		X																																																			
0		F9	clf																																																		
4	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>E</td><td>H</td><td>π</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>B</td><td>'</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>!</td><td>F4</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7				4	E	H	π	1	-	B	'	0	!	F4	clf	5	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td>K</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td></td><td>F></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>"</td><td>P</td><td>"</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>?</td><td>F5</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7		K		4		F>		1	"	P	"	0	?	F5	clf	6	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>Σ</td><td>Y</td><td>S</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>'</td><td>V</td><td>'</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>...</td><td>F6</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7				4	Σ	Y	S	1	'	V	'	0	...	F6	clf
7																																																					
4	E	H	π																																																		
1	-	B	'																																																		
0	!	F4	clf																																																		
7		K																																																			
4		F>																																																			
1	"	P	"																																																		
0	?	F5	clf																																																		
7																																																					
4	Σ	Y	S																																																		
1	'	V	'																																																		
0	...	F6	clf																																																		
1	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>δ</td><td>C</td><td>ϕ</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>I</td><td>F</td><td>∞</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>,</td><td>F1</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7				4	δ	C	ϕ	1	I	F	∞	0	,	F1	clf	2	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td>Q</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>\bar{x}</td><td>L</td><td>μ</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>></td><td>N</td><td><</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>:</td><td>F2</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7		Q		4	\bar{x}	L	μ	1	>	N	<	0	:	F2	clf	3	<table><tr><td>7</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>μ_2</td><td>W</td><td>x^2</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>Δ</td><td>Z</td><td>T</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>:</td><td>F3</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7				4	μ_2	W	x^2	1	Δ	Z	T	0	:	F3	clf
7																																																					
4	δ	C	ϕ																																																		
1	I	F	∞																																																		
0	,	F1	clf																																																		
7		Q																																																			
4	\bar{x}	L	μ																																																		
1	>	N	<																																																		
0	:	F2	clf																																																		
7																																																					
4	μ_2	W	x^2																																																		
1	Δ	Z	T																																																		
0	:	F3	clf																																																		
0	<table><tr><td>7</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>.</td><td>0</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7	7	8	9	4	4	5	6	1	1	2	3	0	.	0	clf	0	<table><tr><td>7</td><td>&</td><td>#</td><td>\$</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>@</td><td>=</td><td>%</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>+</td><td>/</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>*</td><td><</td><td>clf</td></tr></table>	7	&	#	\$	4	@	=	%	1	+	/	-	0	*	<	clf	XQ	<table><tr><td>CALC</td><td>ADD</td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>CAD</td><td>SPS</td><td>DOS</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>CAP</td><td>MOD</td><td>PLOT</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>CPLK</td><td>ESC</td><td>cll</td><td></td></tr></table>	CALC	ADD			CAD	SPS	DOS		CAP	MOD	PLOT		CPLK	ESC	cll	
7	7	8	9																																																		
4	4	5	6																																																		
1	1	2	3																																																		
0	.	0	clf																																																		
7	&	#	\$																																																		
4	@	=	%																																																		
1	+	/	-																																																		
0	*	<	clf																																																		
CALC	ADD																																																				
CAD	SPS	DOS																																																			
CAP	MOD	PLOT																																																			
CPLK	ESC	cll																																																			

Fig. 4

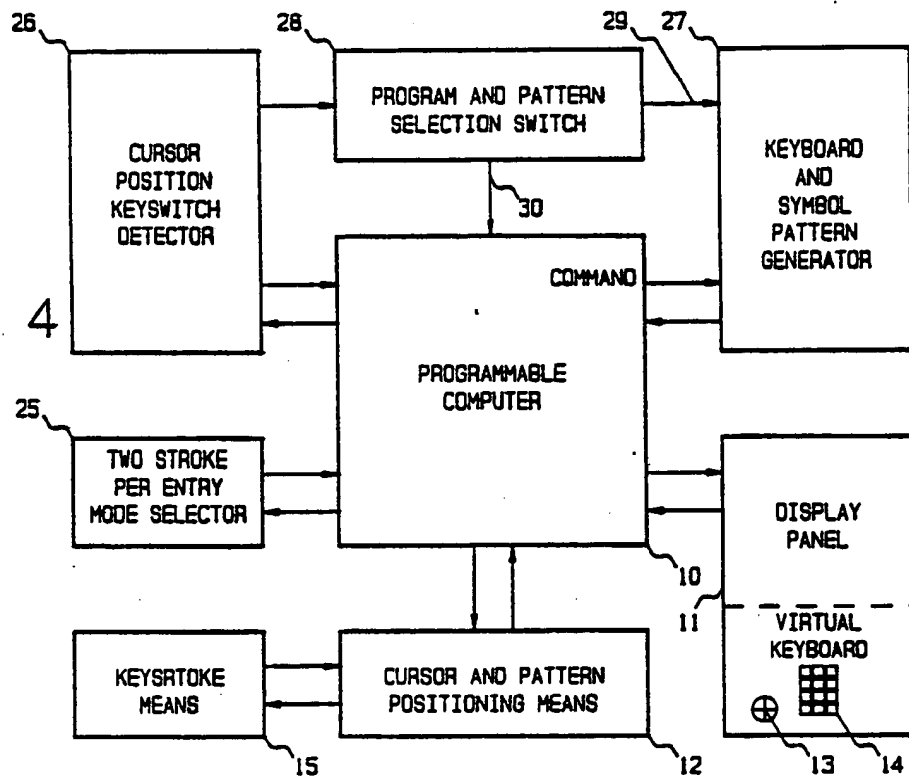


Fig. 5

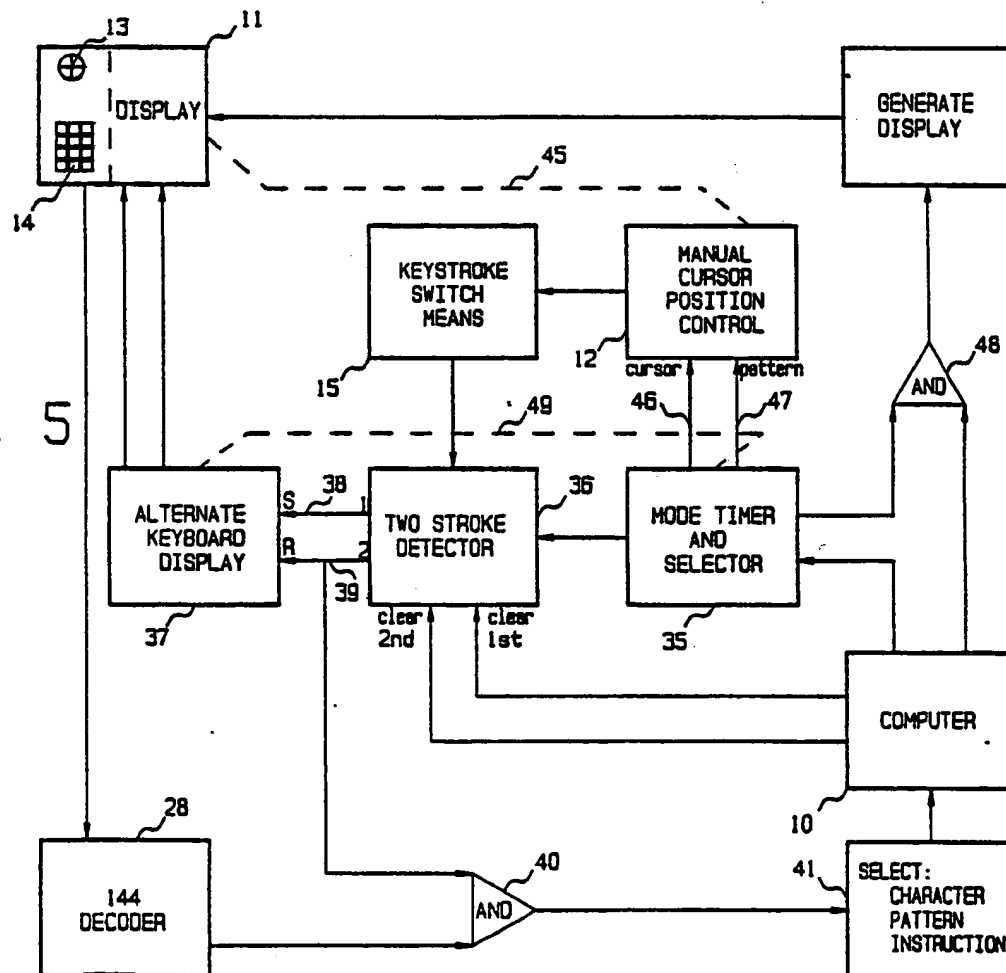


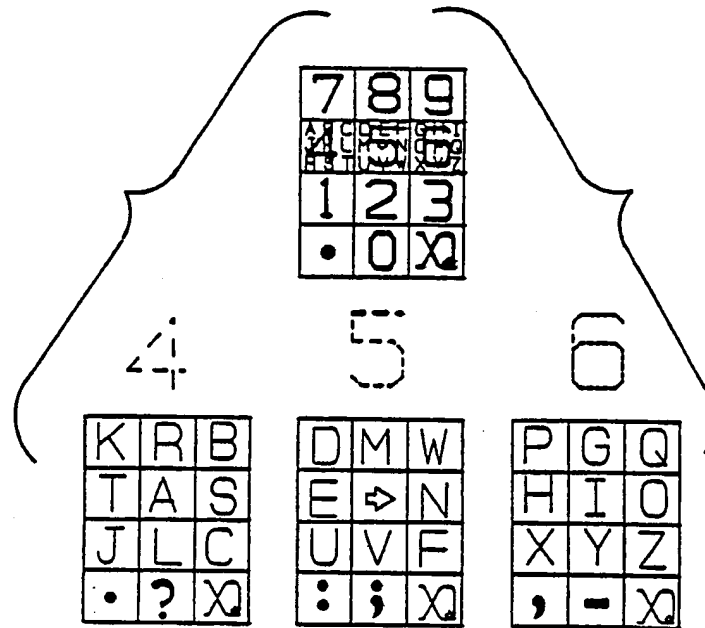
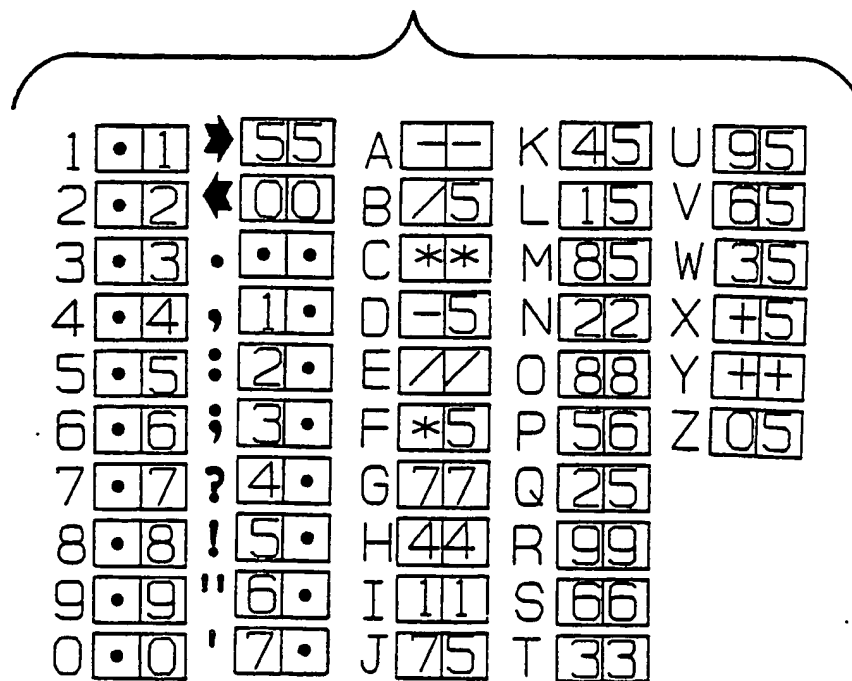
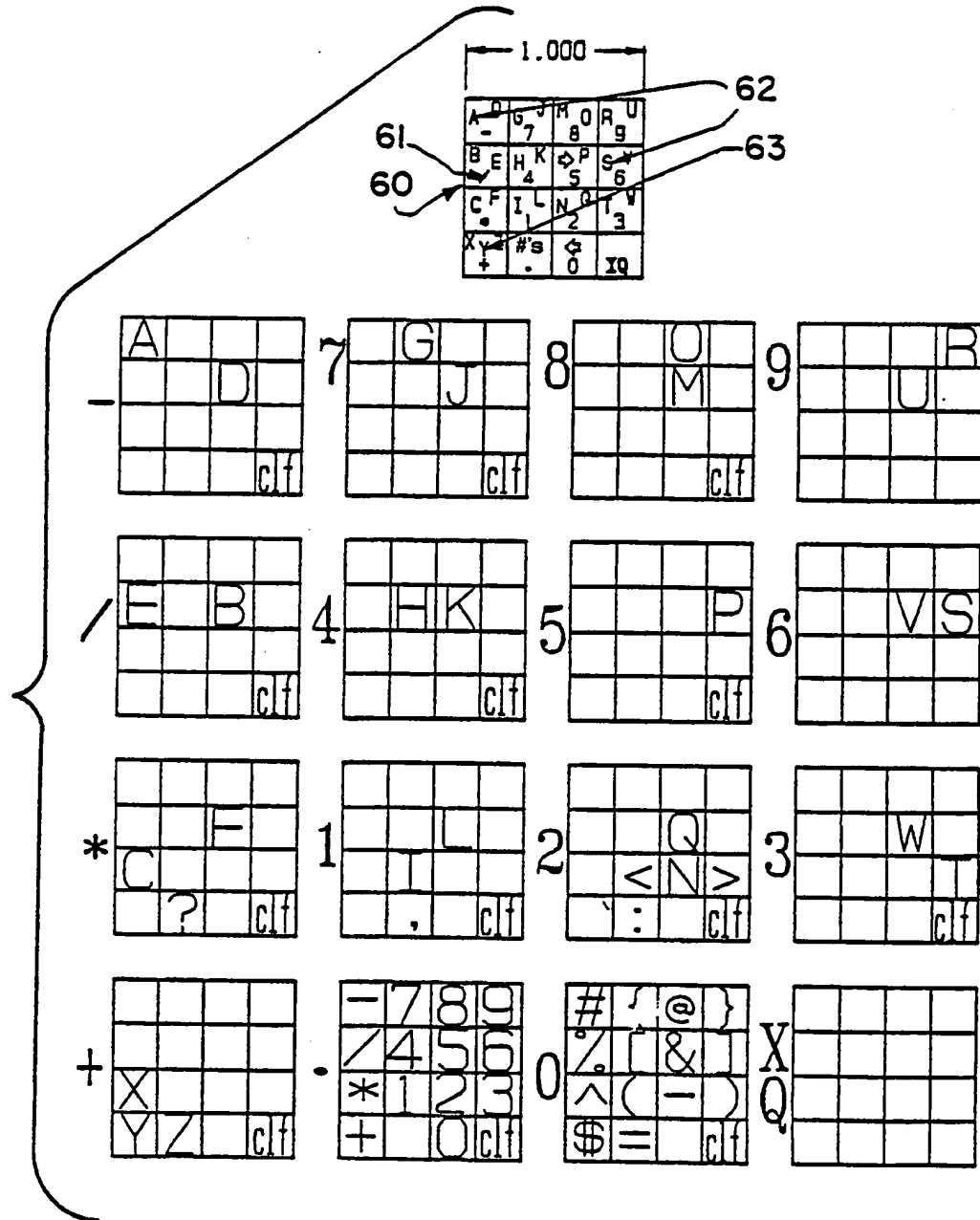
FIG. 6.**FIG. 8.**

FIG. 7





Europäisches Patentamt
European Patent Office
Office européen des brevets

Publication number:

**0 294 518
A3**

12

EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

21 Application number: 87119382.7

51 Int. Cl. 4: G06F 3/033

22 Date of filing: 30.12.87

30 Priority: 10.06.87 US 60225

43 Date of publication of application:
14.12.88 Bulletin 88/50

64 Designated Contracting States:
DE FR GB NL

88 Date of deferred publication of the search report:
10.01.90 Bulletin 90/02

71 Applicant: The Laitram Corporation
220 Laitram Lane
Harahan Louisiana 70115(US)

72 Inventor: Lapeyre, James Martial
13 Richmond Place
New Orleans, Louisiana 70115(US)

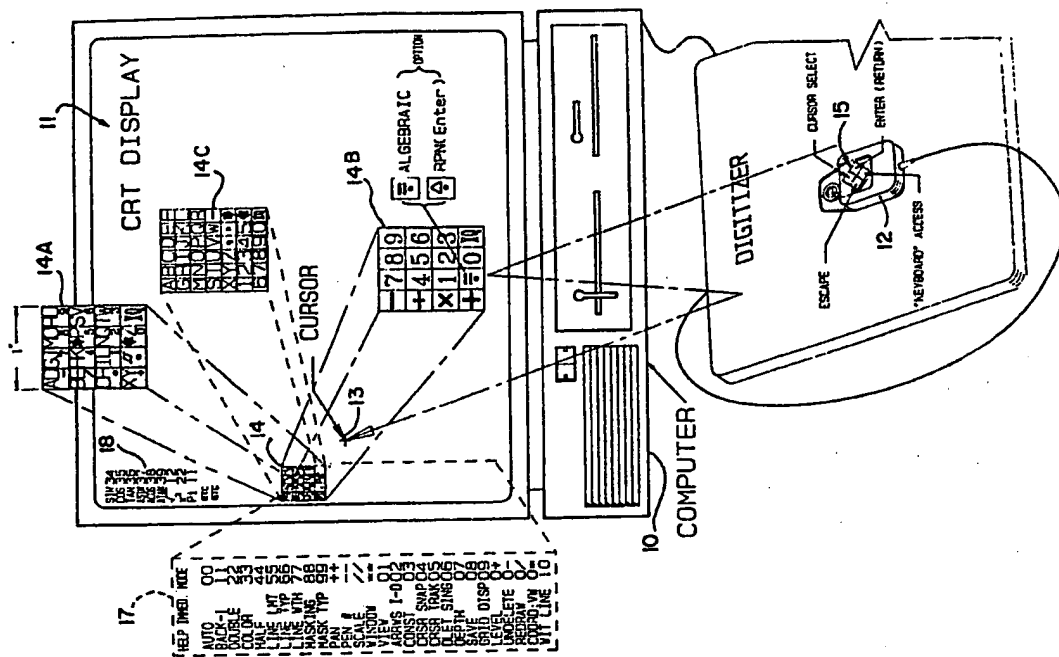
74 Representative: Münzhuber, Robert,
Dipl.-Phys.
Patentanwalt Rumfordstrasse 10
D-8000 München 5(DE)

54 Keyboard keys located on the computer screen.

57 The conventional keyboard is replaced by a virtual keyboard pattern on the computer screen by this invention. Selection of keystrokes is made by a mouse, or the like, positioning a cursor at a desired key for keyswitch selection. This manner of selection of pre-formed patterns available from the computer, such as alphanumeric characters and computer commands is particularly advantageous in a computer aided drafting and design system. Thus, notations and lettering need not be formulated by analog movement of the mouse, but can be selected digitally from the computer store by keyswitching. The resulting equipment therefor eliminates the conventional keyboard but not its operational advantages thereby permitting full computer operation with a mouse or the equivalent. Several features of the invention are provided for more convenient and more rapid operation, such as the replacement of the keyboard arrays as the computer changes modes of operation, and the placement of more frequently used keystrokes on the keyboard arrays for selection by minimized movements of the mouse.

EP 0 294 518 A3

FIG. 1.





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

EP 87 11 9382

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 4)
X	IBM TECHNICAL DISCLOSURE BULLETIN, vol. 21, no. 9, February 1979, pages 3484-3486; New York, US I.F. CHANG et al.: "Light-pen-assisted principal support and workstation" * Whole article *	1	G 06 F 3/033
Y	--	2	
Y	IBM TECHNICAL DISCLOSURE BULLETIN, vol. 25, no. 11A, April 1983, pages 5550-5552; New York, US R.L. GARWIN: "Computer communications" * Whole article *	2	
	--		
A	IBM TECHNICAL DISCLOSURE BULLETIN, vol. 12, no. 2, July 1969, page 351; New York, US G.M. KREMBS et al.: "Gas panel manual entry device" * Whole article *	1	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 4) G 06 F 3/033 G 06 F 3/023 G 06 F 3/00
	--		
A	EP-A-0 203 324 (IBM) * Column 3, line 16 - column 4, line 2; claims 1,2 *	2,3,10,12	
	--		
A	US-A-4 451 895 (J. SLIWKOWSKI) * Figures 1,2,4A; column 4, line 59 - column 5, line 12, lines 39-42; column 6, lines 18-53; claim 1 *	1,2,4	
	--		
	./.		
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 03-10-1989	Examiner ALONSO Y GOICOLEA
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	



CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ All claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ Only part of the claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid.
- namely claims:
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

X LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirement of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions.

namely:

1. Claims 1-4,10-18: Virtual keyboards on the screen for operation by cursor selection
2. Claims 5-9: Two keystrokes for every entry on virtual keyboards

- ☒ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid.
- namely claims:
- ☐ None of the further search fees has been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims.

namely claims:



Application number

EP 87 11 9382

- 2 -

Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 4)
A	WO-A-86 02 473 (NCR CORP.) * Figures 4,5; page 2, line 24 - page 3, line 27; claims 1-4 *	5-9	
A	GB-A-2 145 257 (C.G. SMITH) * Figures 6-9; page 3, lines 11-27 * -----	5	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 4)
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search		Date of completion of the search	Examiner
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			